

[Jewish Folk Tales]

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FOLKLORE

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited) Jewish Tales

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NAME OF WORKER Emanuel Verschleiser

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SUBJECT JEWISH FOLK TALES

Galician Jews (Jews who came to this country from Galicia, once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) relate many stories about the emperor Frances Joseph, who was a great friend of the Jews. An old JEWISH woman in BROWNSVILLE (Borough of Brooklyn) told the interviewer the following story:

Kaiser Francis Joseph was a miser. Once he walked with his retinue around his palace, he walked around with them, all great people, generals, ministers and such, when he saw a halben groshen (half penny) on the ground. The Kaiser immediately bent down, picked up the halben groshen and put it in his pocket.

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His generals and ministers, the great people, looked at each other, smiled, thinking the Kaiser didn't see. The Kaiser saw it all but didn't say a word.

In a few days the Kaiser made a big feast and invited them all. It was a very great feast, full tables of wonderful and rare foods. The great men sat down to eat. They tasted one dish after another. Something was missing. But go say something? They didn't dare say a word, forced themselves to eat. Then the old Kaiser said:

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“You see...halben groschen salt...what a difference it would have made.”

Not long ago an old butcher engaged the interviewer in a conversation on the Coney Island boardwalk. He could also have a little vacation—he said—“because most of my customers from around the Grand Concourse are on vacation”. He boasted that although over seventy he still could do a good days work “plucking a hundred chickens”. When the conversation turned to his native homeland, Galicia, he enthuiastacally began describing what a good life the Jews had under the old emperor, Francis Joseph. He himself knew a Jewish woman in his native village in Galicia who, dissatisfied with the decision of the courts, made her way to Emperor Francis Joseph in Vienna who let her come before him and decided in her favor.

“You should have seen her,” the old butcher said.” A dirty little woman...with unkempt hair...and she came before the Kaiser...If she would be a gentile he wouldn't let her come before him...Such a friend of the Jews he was...”